

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

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A NEW SNAKE (TANTILLA) FROM THE ISTHMUS OF  
TEHUANTEPEC, MEXICO

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A fine series of reptiles secured by Mr. Thomas MacDougall in 1949 on the Pacific slopes of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, contains a single specimen of an undescribed and unnamed species of *Tantilla* which may be known as:

***Tantilla triseriata* new species**

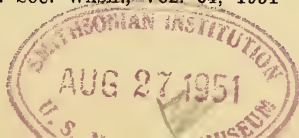
*Holotype.* Univ. Ill. Mus. Nat. Hist., No. 20198, a female from Coatlán, Oaxaca, collected October 9, 1949, by Thomas MacDougall.

*Diagnosis.* A three-lined, light-collared *Tantilla* with 163 ventrals, 61 subcaudals, prefrontals twice as long as internasals, and relatively extensive markings on lower jaw (including a pair of comma-shaped brown marks on the third and fourth infralabials). Allied to *T. taeniata* Bocourt of Guatemala, differing in higher ventral count; common prefrontal suture longer than distance of prefrontals from tip of snout; prefrontal and second supralabial broadly in contact; brown head cap more sharply defined and more extensive, reaching all except two small areas of upper lip and extending onto mental and anterior infralabials; no light marks on prefrontals; and nuchal collar slightly more cranial in position, its posterior border a minimum of one scale length behind posterior extremity of parietals, anterior border equally far from rear edge of parietals.

*Description of holotype.* Frontal hexagonal, length exceeding distance from tip of snout, only posterior angle acute; maximum length of prefrontals greater than their distance from tip of snout, slightly less than half maximum length of frontal, twice maximum length of prefrontals, and more than 3/4 maximum length of supraoculars; common internasal suture one third length of common prefrontal suture; latter nearly 1½ times as long as its distance from tip of snout; parietals deeply cleft posteriorly, cleft occupied by two scales; common parietal suture 2/3 length of frontal; nasal large, 3/4 as high as rostral at rostro-nasal suture, constricted at position of nostril; nasal completely divided, broadly separated from preocular by contact of distinctly elevated second supralabial and lateral extension of prefrontal; prefrontal-supralabial suture subequal to or slightly shorter than prefrontal-nasal suture; two postoculars, lower larger than upper; two subequal temporals, an anterior and posterior, both twice as long as broad; eye separated from tip of snout by slightly more than twice diameter of orbit, separated from lip by 2/3 its diameter; seven supralabials; six infralabials, the

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scales of the anterior pair in very narrow contact medially, fourth much the largest; anterior four infralabials in contact with chinshields; posterior chinshield  $\frac{2}{3}$  length and  $\frac{3}{4}$  width of anterior; three pairs of scales between posterior chinshields and first ventral.

Scales in 15-15-15 rows, smooth, unpitted; ventrals 163, anal divided, subcaudals 61. Total length 203 mm., tail 45 mm.; sex female.

Top of head anterior to nuchal collar chestnut brown except for a narrow semicircular light mark bordering sutures of rostral with nasal and internasal; side of head anterior to eye brown with a distinct yellow triangular mark occupying posterior portion of nasal, first, second, and a portion of third supralabials; behind eye a large yellow spot occupying posterior half of anterior temporal, lower postocular, and most of fourth and fifth supralabials; ventral side of head light yellow and with a number of dark marks, including as the most prominent a comma-shaped area continuous with vertical dark band through eye involving third and fourth infralabials and extreme edge of posterior chinshields; anterior half of mental, nearly half of first infralabials, and posterolateral corner of second infralabial dark.

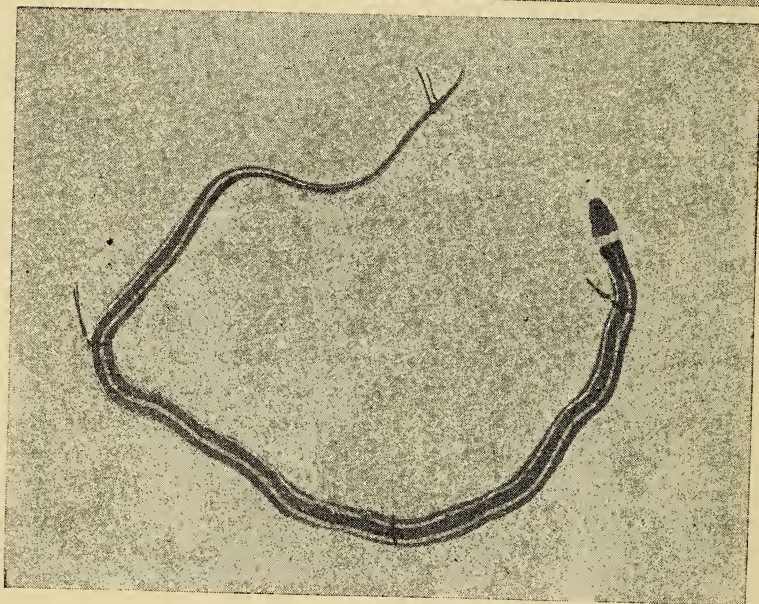
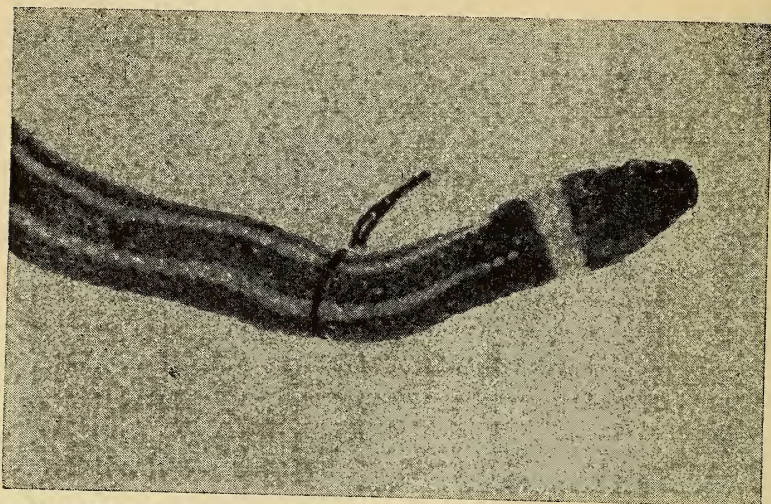
Nuchal collar two scale lengths wide dorsally,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  scale lengths wide laterally; posterior border a maximum of a full scale length behind rear edge of parietal, anterior border a scale length cephalad from rear edge of parietals and passing ventrally through the secondary temporals and posterior third of seventh supralabials.

Ground color of body rich chestnut brown dorsally with three light yellow longitudinal stripes; middorsal stripe beginning  $1\frac{1}{2}$  scale lengths behind nuchal collar, at which point it is one scale wide; seven scale lengths behind collar middorsal stripe widens, covering inner halves of paravertebral scale rows, continuing almost to tip of tail; lateral stripes beginning three scale lengths behind seventh supralabials,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  scale lengths behind nuchal collar, occupying adjacent halves of third and fourth scale rows, continuing almost to tip of tail; light stripes on body approximately half the width of dark background; middorsal stripe, except at extreme anterior end, slightly wider than laterals; venter light yellow and unmarked; lowermost scale row of same color as venter anteriorly, ground color extending onto upper edge progressively more extensively toward anus, beginning at about level of 12th ventral and involving a maximum of  $\frac{1}{2}$  the scale row in front of anus.

*Comparisons.* Of the species now known from Mexico, the ones most closely resembling *T. triseriata* are *T. jani*, *T. striata*, and *T. flavilineata*. From *T. striata* the new species differs in having higher ventral and subcaudal counts and in details of pattern. From *T. striata* and *T. flavilineata* it differs in having a higher subcaudal count and a sharp contrast between ground color and the color of the collar and longitudinal light stripes. Actually, however, *T. triseriata* appears to belong to a Central American group, not previously recorded from Mexico. Unquestionably *T. taeniata* of Guatemala is its closest relative, from which it differs by at least those features already pointed out in our diagnosis. The original description (Bocourt, Miss. Sci. Mex. Amer. Cent., Rept., livr. 9, 1883, p. 587) indicates a greater similarity than does comparison of our specimen with Bocourt's figure (*op. cit.*, livr. 10, 1886, pl. 37, figs. 3, 3a-d)

inasmuch as the most obvious differences between the species are found in the nature of the head markings and arrangement of head scales. Differences other than those here emphasized but evident upon comparison of Bocourt's illustration and our type may prove constant despite variability in other species. The remarkably large size of the prefrontals in both species is perhaps a unique group character. Inasmuch as the type is slightly desiccated we have not attempted to examine teeth.

Coatlán is located in central southern Oaxaca, west of the narrowest portion of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Extent of range of the species is not evident, but it would not be expected to approach that of *T. taeniata*, the closest known relative.



EXPLANATION OF PLATE

Fig. 1. *Tantilla triseriata*, type. Dorsal view of head and fore part of body.

Fig. 2. *Tantilla triseriata*, type. Dorsal view.